ELECTIONS BC

A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

Service Plan

2007/08 - 2009/10

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For more information on Elections BC
Visit our website at:
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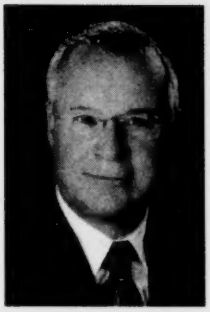
Message from the Chief Electoral Officer



I am pleased to present Elections BC's 2007/08 – 2009/10 Service Plan to the Legislative Assembly.

This plan describes Elections BC's overall work program, establishes our priorities and indicates the performance measures we expect to achieve over the next three years.

The Premier announced (on April 27, 2006) that the scheduled 2008 referendum on electoral reform would be delayed to coincide with the 2009 provincial general election. This change of dates resulted in a significant re-focusing of event preparation activities at Elections BC.

Preparations to implement new electoral boundaries for both the current electoral system and the proposed single transferable vote system were narrowed to deal only with the current system. Devising methods to have a full state of readiness for an election under both systems was no longer necessary -- we now know that the single member plurality system will be used for the 2009 election.

Staff efforts will continue to be focussed on identifying the most efficient and effective means to fully meet our legislated mandate which requires us to:

- administer the next provincial enumeration,
- implement new electoral boundaries,
- conduct the province-wide referendum and, at the same time
- administer the provincial general election statutorily scheduled to be held on May 12, 2009.

During the current fiscal year Elections BC will launch three programs to complement our primary functions.

We will invest in our core staff through training, professional development and additional hiring. It is critical that we recruit, develop and retain staff to be the province's cadre of professional electoral administrators.

We will also begin implementation of a long term strategy of public education programs aimed specifically at increasing voter engagement with electoral democracy. Voter participation has been in decline across Canada over the last twenty years. We must act now to understand, address and reverse this trend. Voters need to engage with democracy on an ongoing basis, not just once every four years.

As well, we will soon introduce new technology and information systems to improve the transparency of political financing disclosure required of registered political parties, constituency associations, candidates and leadership contestants. Public web access to a searchable political contributions database will greatly improve the availability of political finance contribution and expenditure information.

Every Elections BC staff member was involved in the process of developing this service plan. The work identified will enable us to achieve our organizational goals. Our performance measurement program will ensure that we stay on track as we steadily move toward those goals. And reaching our goals allows us to achieve our vision -- to be leaders in electoral administration.

Harry Neufeld
Chief Electoral Officer
May 2007

About Elections BC

Elections BC is a non-partisan Office of the Legislature responsible for the fair and impartial administration of provincial elections and referenda, recalls and initiatives. Elections BC is the usual name for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. As a statutory Officer of the Legislature, the Chief Electoral Officer reports directly to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker. The Chief Electoral Officer cannot be a member of a political party, make contributions to a party or candidate, or vote in provincial elections.

Mandate

To administer the provincial electoral process in British Columbia in accordance with the *Election Act, Recall and Initiative Act*, *Referendum Act* and *Constitutional Amendment Approval Act*.

Vision, Mission, Goals

Vision

To be leaders in electoral administration.

Mission

To serve democracy in British Columbia through the fair and impartial administration of the provincial electoral process.

Goals

1. Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process.
2. Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events.
3. Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process.
4. Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices.

Our Structure

For operational purposes, the organization is divided into five program areas.

Executive

The Executive program area provides organizational leadership, and is responsible for legislation, Orders and Regulations, compliance, enforcement and investigations, inter-jurisdictional liaison, reporting to the Legislative Assembly, communications (including event communication as required by the *Election Act* and *Recall and Initiative Act*), public education programs regarding voter registration and the electoral process, and voter outreach.

Through its planning unit, it is also responsible for strategic planning, the development and maintenance of the Elections BC planning framework, partnership development, risk management and performance management.

Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration

The Electoral Finance and Corporate Administration program area comprises three service units. The electoral finance unit is responsible for ensuring compliance with electoral finance legislation and maintaining the registers of political parties, constituency associations and advertising sponsors. The unit conducts compliance reviews of the financing reports of political parties, constituency associations, candidates, advertising sponsors, leadership contestants, and recall and initiative participants. The unit also trains financial agents, performs audits of financial reports and conducts investigations.

The finance and administration unit is responsible for corporate financial administration, including budgets, and facilities management.

The human resources and development services unit provides strategic human resource planning and services for Elections BC's core group of 44 public service employees and up to 30,000 temporary staff and election officials during major electoral events. This includes the development of terms and conditions of employment for temporary employees, development of recruitment models and establishment of both corporate and event training frameworks.

Event Planning and Management

The Event Planning and Management program area is responsible for the effective and efficient planning and administration of provincial electoral events including general elections, by-elections, referenda, and recall and initiative petitions. This includes ensuring Elections BC is in a constant state of readiness for non-scheduled events, as well as leading the planning, preparation and administration of scheduled events.

Event Planning and Management also manages Elections BC's District Electoral Officers, coordinates event support activities across other program areas, and leads post event reporting, evaluation, and assessment.

Geographic and Voter Data Services

Geographic and Voter Data Services (GVDS) is responsible for voter registration, maintenance of the provincial voters list, and the production of high quality electoral data and information. This includes the maintenance of a geo-spatial database containing B.C.'s electoral boundaries, road network and address data.

The GVDS program area is also responsible for the provision and production of a variety of products necessary for the administration of electoral events including the provincial voters list (printed or electronic), the address register, the integrated digital electoral atlas, electoral maps, street indexes, and the Location Index.

Information Technology

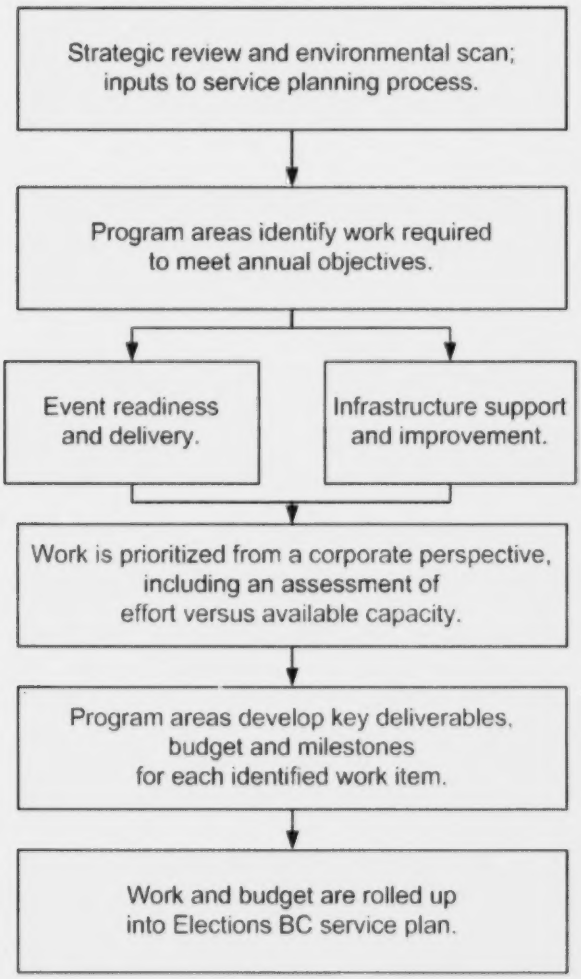
The Information Technology (IT) program area provides information management systems, computer infrastructure, and technical services for Elections BC. The program area leads IT planning, develops and implements IT policies, procedures and standards, implements corporate IT initiatives and performs systems operations, administration, security and maintenance.

IT participates in corporate level strategic and operational planning by forecasting IT requirements in anticipation of future program and business needs, and selecting technology options which provide best support to Elections BC goals and objectives. The IT program area also leads or coordinates all information systems projects and approves their associated schedules, budgets and expenditures.

Elections BC's Three Year Planning Cycle

This service plan is based on the implementation of a new three-year planning model that brings together all Elections BC work (including events, special projects, and all ongoing operational activities) into a single planning framework, to enable corporate prioritization and to establish ongoing linkages with the budget development process. The new model has been effective in ensuring all work is aligned with Elections BC's goals, and assists with cross-organizational resource allocation.

Three Year Model


Strategic review and environmental scan; inputs to service planning process.
Program areas identify work required to meet annual objectives.
Event readiness and delivery.
Infrastructure support and improvement.
Work is prioritized from a corporate perspective, including an assessment of effort versus available capacity.
Program areas develop key deliverables, budget and milestones for each identified work item.
Work and budget are rolled up into Elections BC service plan.

Responding to our Environment

This service plan also reflects an assessment and analysis of the environment in which Elections BC operates. Our priorities are focussed on enabling Elections BC to overcome the key challenges identified below.

Key Challenges ... and Solutions

1. Building and maintaining a cadre of professional election administrators

   Election administration is a specialized business with a steep learning curve. Elections BC faces a distinct challenge in developing and retaining the necessary core staff, given today's work environment characterized by falling unemployment rates and significant human resources market competition.

   Previously, Elections BC used temporary and contract staff to address resource shortfalls. This strategy proved costly and ineffective as staffing investments were inevitably lost when temporary staff left the organization. Elections BC must now invest in core staff, and hire additional full-time employees to ensure a knowledgeable, skilled and stable cadre of professional election administrators.

2. Encouraging democratic participation

   Voter participation in all aspects of democracy is essential to our society. Yet across Canada, democratic participation has generally been in decline since the early 1980s, and this decline has been significant. Voter participation in each of the last three provincial general elections has been less than 60%.[1]

   Democratic participation must improve. Elections BC is investing in long-term, ongoing public education programs to combat declining voter participation, and to encourage greater understanding and engagement in all aspects of the democratic process. These programs must challenge B.C.'s voters to not only participate during an election, but also to embrace the full range of their democratic rights.

1 In terms of the percentage of eligible B.C. voters who voted. In 1996, 59.11% of eligible B.C. voters voted, in 2001, 55.44%, in 2005, 58.19%.

3. Ensuring timely and accurate financial reporting by political participants

Comprehensive, accurate, timely and accessible financial reporting is the core of our political financing system. Poor quality reporting erodes confidence in the system.

Currently, the quality (or accuracy) of financial reports filed with Elections BC is a challenge. Over 90% of the reports received contain one or more errors. To address this issue Elections BC will invest in resources to enable the early identification and correction of reporting errors, and to improve the quality of reporting. As well, through the launch of a searchable political contributions database, Elections BC will increase the accessibility of financial information for public scrutiny.

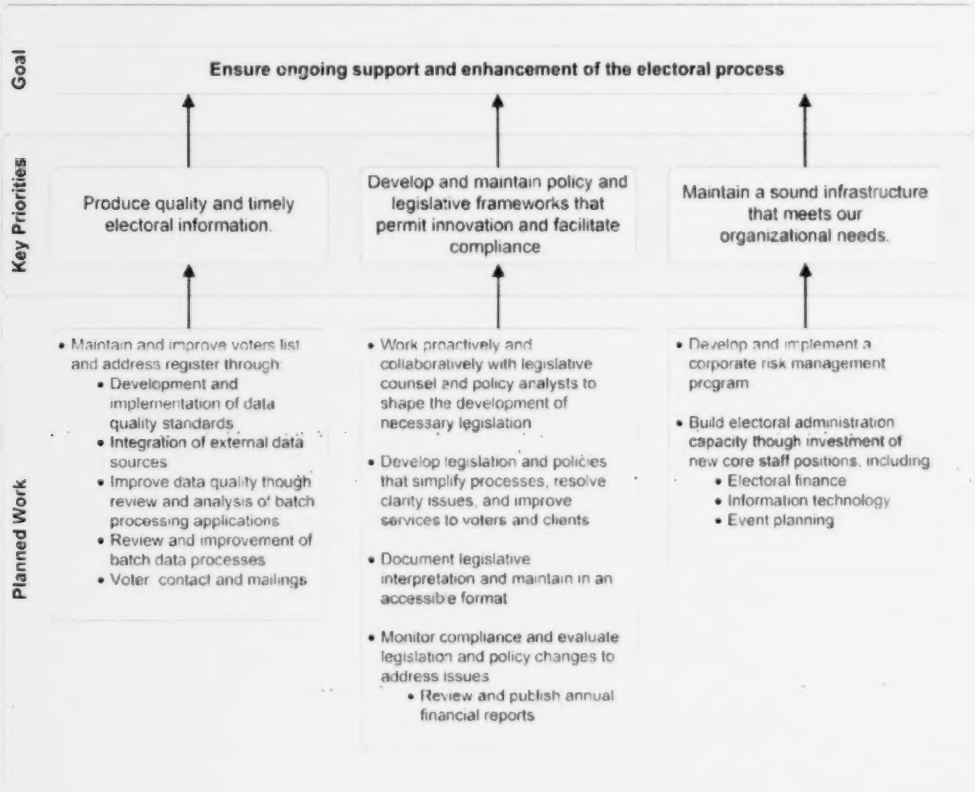
Elections BC's Work Plan

As part of the strategic planning process, Elections BC developed four goals that are directly aligned with its vision, mission and mandate. In developing this service plan, Elections BC started with those goals, then invested significant effort into identifying the work required to achieve them. As each proposed work item was identified, it was first assessed against all goals, then structured under the appropriate goal to ensure organizational alignment.

Work Planning Maps

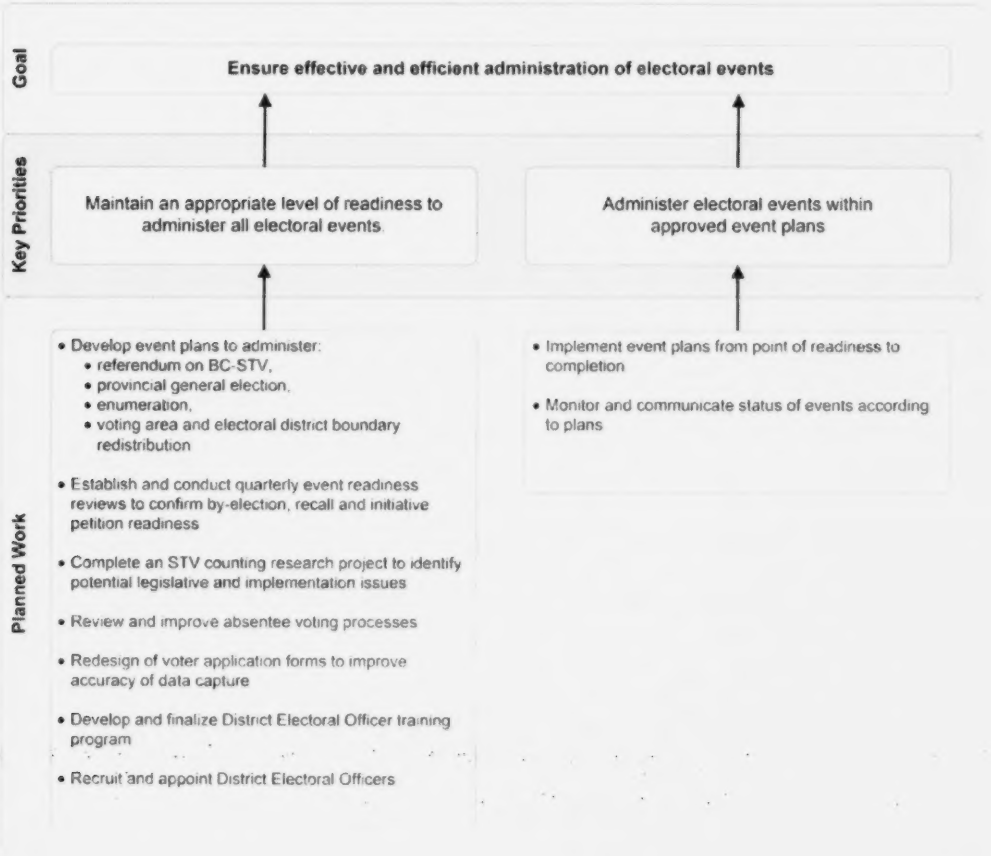
Goal #1 – Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process

This goal recognizes the significant volume of work Elections BC must do between electoral events. It includes keeping electoral information up to date, maintaining legislative and policy frameworks, and ensuring the appropriate infrastructure and business processes are in place to support the effective and efficient delivery of the electoral process.


Goal
Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process
Key Priorities
Produce quality and timely electoral information.
Develop and maintain policy and legislative frameworks that permit innovation and facilitate compliance
Maintain a sound infrastructure that meets our organizational needs.
Planned Work
• Maintain and improve voters list and address register through:
• Development and implementation of data quality standards
• Integration of external data sources
• Improve data quality though review and analysis of batch processing applications
• Review and improvement of batch data processes
• Voter contact and mailings
• Work proactively and collaboratively with legislative counsel and policy analysts to shape the development of necessary legislation
• Develop legislation and policies that simplify processes, resolve clarity issues, and improve services to voters and clients
• Document legislative interpretation and maintain in an accessible format
• Monitor compliance and evaluate legislation and policy changes to address issues
• Review and publish annual financial reports
• Develop and implement a corporate risk management program
• Build electoral administration capacity though investment of new core staff positions, including
• Electoral finance
• Information technology
• Event planning

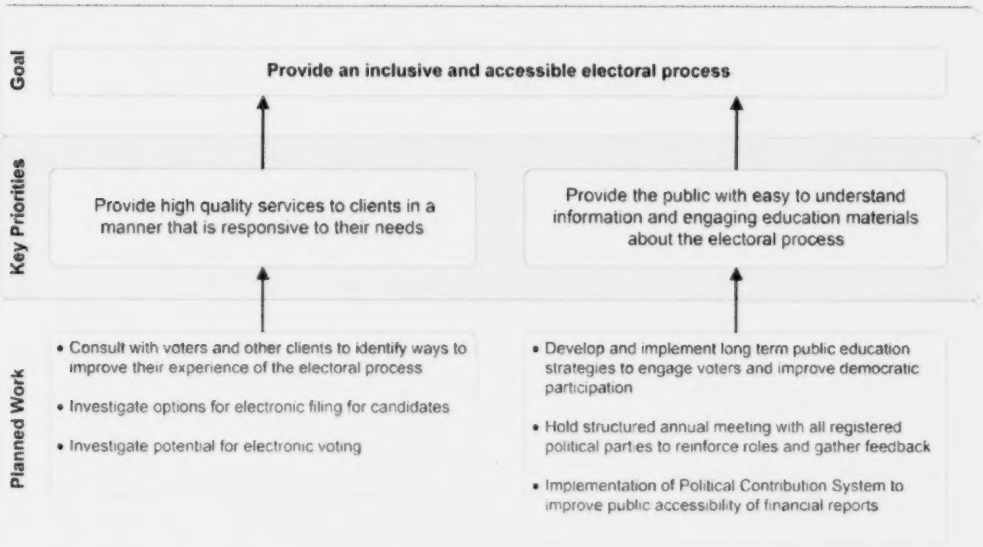
Goal #2 – Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events

This goal flows directly from the mission statement and focuses on electoral events. It relates to how Elections BC prepares for and administers events, and includes the key strategies that will be implemented to achieve success.


Goal
Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events
Key Priorities
Maintain an appropriate level of readiness to administer all electoral events
Administer electoral events within approved event plans
Planned Work
• Develop event plans to administer:
• referendum on BC-STV,
• provincial general election,
• enumeration,
• voting area and electoral district boundary redistribution
• Establish and conduct quarterly event readiness reviews to confirm by-election, recall and initiative petition readiness
• Complete an STV counting research project to identify potential legislative and implementation issues
• Review and improve absentee voting processes
• Redesign of voter application forms to improve accuracy of data capture
• Develop and finalize District Electoral Officer training program
• Recruit and appoint District Electoral Officers
• Implement event plans from point of readiness to completion
• Monitor and communicate status of events according to plans

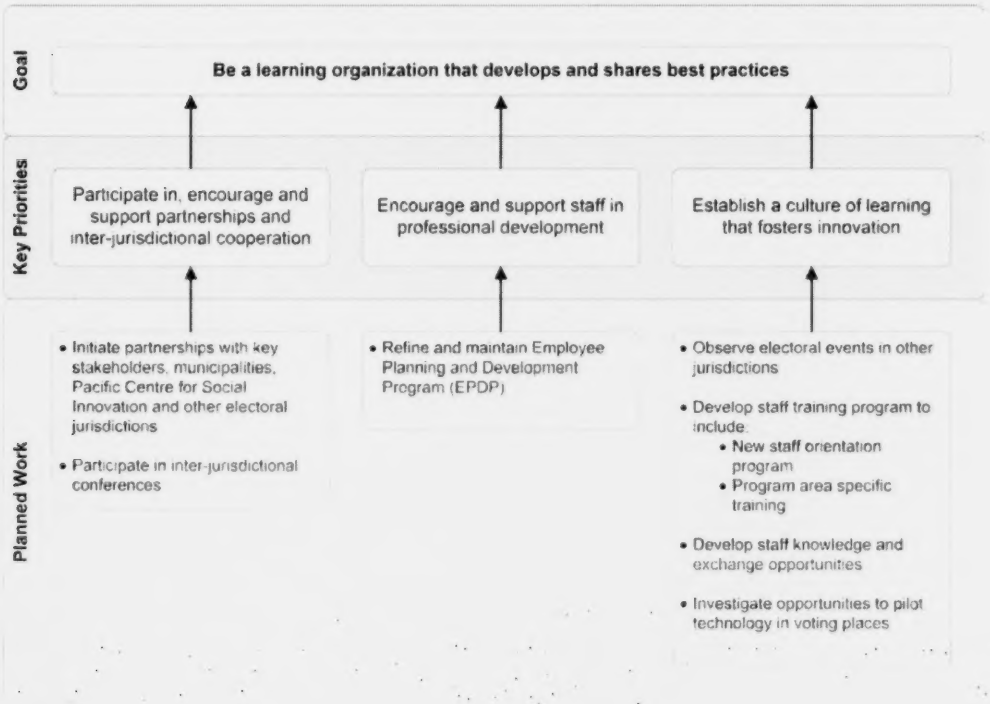
Goal #3 – Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process

This goal recognizes that the electoral process must be inclusive and accessible to those it serves. It focuses on reaching out to voters and our other core clients, assessing their needs and then delivering quality services that meet those needs – where possible and cost efficient. It also includes how Elections BC communicates externally and educates the public.


Goal
Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process
Key Priorities
Provide high quality services to clients in a manner that is responsive to their needs
Provide the public with easy to understand information and engaging education materials about the electoral process
Planned Work
• Consult with voters and other clients to identify ways to improve their experience of the electoral process
• Investigate options for electronic filing for candidates
• Investigate potential for electronic voting
• Develop and implement long term public education strategies to engage voters and improve democratic participation
• Hold structured annual meeting with all registered political parties to reinforce roles and gather feedback
• Implementation of Political Contribution System to improve public accessibility of financial reports

Goal #4 – Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices

This goal flows from Elections BC's vision, recognizing that to be leaders there must also be internal leadership through staff development, and ensuring that work is conducted using best practices. It emphasizes the value placed on establishing a learning culture, and supports the importance of professional development at Elections BC. It also reflects the value of partnerships and cooperation in developing and sharing best practices.


Goal
Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices
Key Priorities
Participate in, encourage and support partnerships and inter-jurisdictional cooperation
Encourage and support staff in professional development
Establish a culture of learning that fosters innovation
Planned Work
• Initiate partnerships with key stakeholders, municipalities, Pacific Centre for Social Innovation and other electoral jurisdictions
• Participate in inter-jurisdictional conferences
• Refine and maintain Employee Planning and Development Program (EPDP)
• Observe electoral events in other jurisdictions
• Develop staff training program to include:
• New staff orientation program
• Program area specific training
• Develop staff knowledge and exchange opportunities
• Investigate opportunities to pilot technology in voting places

Elections BC's Reporting Framework

Effectively measuring our progress and performance as we implement this service plan is critical to ensuring our success. Based on the four organizational goals, a performance measurement framework has been developed using a concise set of key performance indicators.

Goals and Key Performance Indicators

Goal #1 - Ensure ongoing support and enhancement of the electoral process.

Key Performance Measure - Elections BC will maintain a high quality voters list measured through coverage, currency and net currency.[2]

Performance Measure	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Voters list Quality (%):					
Coverage	90	86	84	87	90
Currency	75	77	76	78	80
Net Currency	68	66	64	68	72

2 Coverage is defined as the percentage of voters on the list compared against the number of eligible voters in the province. Currency is defined as the percentage of voters on the list at the right address. Net currency is defined as the percentage of eligible voters on the list at the right address, and calculated by multiplying coverage times currency.

Goal #2 - Ensure effective and efficient administration of electoral events.

Key Performance Measure - Elections BC will establish and achieve event readiness targets.

Performance Measure	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Targets established (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Targets achieved (%)	100	100	100	100	100

Goal #3 - Provide an inclusive and accessible electoral process.

Key Performance Indicator 1 – Provide high quality services to clients in a manner that is responsive to their needs. Elections BC will annually survey selected client groups to evaluate how well services provided respond to client needs.

Performance Measure	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Average annual satisfaction score (%)	100	80	80	80	90

Goal #4 - Be a learning organization that develops and shares best practices.

Key Performance Indicator - Elections BC staff will participate in a variety of educational activities to ensure they maintain a high level of knowledge and skill in the performance of their duties.

Performance Measure	2005/06 Actual	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target
Calculated learning index score[3] for Elections BC's permanent staff (%)	New measure	80	80	80	80

3 The learning index is an aggregate measure of Elections BC staff participation in workshops, conferences, the Electoral Technology Accord, partnership agreements, inter-jurisdictional sharing, and employee training.

Notes about Performance Measures and Targets

These performance indicators have been modified from the performance measures and targets identified in previous years. This smaller set is more relevant to the core business of Elections BC, and better reflects the organization's current focus and direction. Due to the small size of the ongoing organization, all program areas must collaborate on achieving our goals.

Elections BC's Financial Plan

How we Allocate our Resources

The activities of Elections BC are driven by the legislation it administers and the associated actions of its clients. The timing of by-elections, recall and initiative petitions and other electoral events are not controlled by Elections BC. In consideration of the unpredictable nature of the work of the office, both the *Election Act* and the *Recall and Initiative Act* establish that all necessary expenses required for the administration of those Acts must be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recognizes that the budget needs of Elections BC are demand driven and has established a process whereby the Chief Electoral Officer advises the Chair of the Committee in writing when additional funds are required to administer electoral events. This process has been followed for all electoral events since 2002.

The following pages provide a summary of the financial and human resources available to Elections BC annually for on-going operations and purchases of capital assets. On-going operating costs do not include costs associated with the detailed planning, preparation and conduct of large scale electoral events, such as the pending electoral boundary redistribution.

Costs associated with administering the enumeration, referendum and 2009 provincial general election will be reported separately, as required by the *Election Act* for all electoral events. Additional funding requirements that may arise from these events are not reflected in this plan.

Resource Summary Table

		2006/07 (budget) $	2007/08 (planned) $	2008/09 (planned) $	2009/10 (planned) $
ONGOING OPERATING COSTS					
Funding					
Requested		6,508,000	7,322,700	7,659,200	7,724,900
Treasury Board adjustment *		37,000	-	-	-
Total funding for ongoing operating costs		6,545,000	7,322,700	7,659,200	7,724,900
Notes	**Expenses for ongoing operating costs**				
1	Salaries and benefits	2,873,770	3,219,400	3,299,800	3,382,300
2	Amortization	715,551	945,700	1,122,200	1,022,900
3	Building occupancy charges	392,970	419,400	429,900	440,700
4	Office expenses and telecommunications	263,166	269,100	275,900	282,800
5	Corporate information systems	1,267,410	1,236,700	1,267,700	1,300,700
6	Event readiness	48,350	48,000	49,200	50,700
7	Address and boundary maintenance	349,390	337,500	346,100	354,800
8	Voters list maintenance	125,520	91,300	93,700	96,000
9	Political entity reporting	174,550	314,500	322,500	330,600
10	Officer salary and benefits	284,323	291,100	298,400	305,800
11	Voter education	50,000	150,000	153,800	157,600
	Total expenses for ongoing operating costs	6,545,000	7,322,700	7,659,200	7,724,900

* Due to an increase in the charges for employee benefits, Treasury Board increased the 2006/07 budget by $37,000.

Resource Summary Table (continued)

	2006/07 (budget) $	2007/08 (planned) $	2008/09 (planned) $	2009/10 (planned) $
CAPITAL ASSETS				(Note 1)
Requested funding				
Personal computer hardware and software	180,000	14,200	149,200	
Mainframe/mini computer hardware and software	650,000	1,113,600	1,362,900	
Office furniture and equipment	-	-	6,000	
Tenant improvements	-	-	-	
Total funding for capital assets	830,000	1,127,800	1,518,100	
Expenditures for capital assets				
Personal computer hardware and software	180,000	14,200	149,200	
Mainframe/mini computer hardware and software	650,000	1,113,600	1,362,900	
Office furniture and equipment	-	-	6,000	
Tenant improvements	-	-	-	
Total expenditures for capital assets	830,000	1,127,800	1,518,100	
Full-time Equivalents (FTE)	39	44	44	44

Note 1: A capital budget projection for 2009/10 is unavailable as we are currently assessing replacement options for the Electoral Information System (EIS).

Notes on Resource Summary Table

1. Salaries and benefits of permanent and some temporary employees.
2. Amortization for the Electoral information System (EIS), the Recall and Initiative Verification System (RIVERS), Motor Voter System, Inventory Distribution System and other electoral event systems, office computer systems and furniture.
3. Accommodation and Real Estate Services (ARES) charges for office and warehouse rent.
4. Office expenses, telephones, supplies, equipment, postage, courier, bank charges, staff training, travel, legal fees, and statutory advertising.
5. Office-wide information systems costs, including maintenance of the Electoral Information System, email, internet and network services.
6. Forms, guides and software maintenance to ensure constant readiness for recall petitions, initiative petitions and by-elections.
7. Maintenance and updating of address register, base map updates, electoral district and voting area boundary maintenance.
8. Voters list updates, voter registration, software subscriptions and voters list system maintenance.
9. Reviews of financial reports of political entities. Guides, forms, and training for political entities, financial agents and auditors. Registration and updates of political parties, constituency associations, and advertising sponsors. Maintenance of scanning and financial reporting electronic disclosure systems.
10. Salary and benefits of the Chief Electoral Officer.
11. Voter education programs, including school kits.

Glossary of Terms

By-election	An election other than one conducted as part of a general election.
Electoral district	The province is divided into electoral districts (constituencies or ridings), each returning one Member to the Legislative Assembly.
Enumeration	The registration of voters by residence-to-residence visitation or by another method directed or authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer.
General election	Elections called on the same date for all electoral districts in the province to elect all Members of the Legislative Assembly.
Initiative petition	A petition under the *Recall and Initiative Act* to have a proposed law introduced in the Legislative Assembly.
Initiative vote	If the Select Standing Committee refers a successful initiative petition and draft Bill to the Chief Electoral Officer, the Chief Electoral Officer must hold an initiative vote under the *Recall and Initiative Act*.
Recall petition	A petition under the *Recall and Initiative Act* to remove a Member of the Legislative Assembly from office between elections.
Redistribution	A process to change electoral boundaries to account for changes in voter population or other concerns.
Referendum	If the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers that an expression of public opinion is desirable on any matter of public interest or concern, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by Regulation, order that a referendum be conducted under the *Referendum Act*. A referendum is binding on the government that initiated it.

Voters list	The voters list is prepared and maintained by the Chief Electoral Officer, and contains the names and residential addresses of registered voters in each electoral district.
Voting area	An electoral district is divided into voting areas for the purpose of assigning voters to voting places. A voting area is generally a geographic area containing no more than 400 registered voters.

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